

Second Presbyterian Church
July 12, 2026 || Year A – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

‘That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.
Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there,
while the whole crowd stood on the beach.
And he told them many things in parables, saying:
“Listen! A sower went out to sow.
And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path,
and the birds came and ate them up.
Other seeds fell on rocky ground,
where they did not have much soil,
and they sprang up quickly,
since they had no depth of soil.
But when the sun rose,
they were scorched,
and since they had no root,
they withered away.
Other seeds fell among thorns,
and the thorns grew up and choked them.
Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain,
some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
If you have ears, hear!”

“Hear, then, the parable of the sower.
When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it,
the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart;
this is what was sown on the path.
As for what was sown on rocky ground,
this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,
yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while,
and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word,
that person immediately falls away.

As for what was sown among thorns,
 this is the one who hears the word,
 but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word,
 and it yields nothing.
 But as for what was sown on good soil,
 this is the one who hears the word and understands it,
 who indeed bears fruit
 and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

For the word of God in scripture,
 for the word of God among us,
 for the word of God within us.
Thanks be to God.

We stand on the beach's shore and look upon the sea.

Jesus sits in a boat on the sea's waters – a solid presence breathing with the waves.

Jesus' poem rolls in with the moon's tides and deposits upon our shores.

A sower sows.

Path-strewn seeds. Hungry birds.

Rocky ground. Depthless soil.

Scorching sun. Withering roots.

Choking thorns.

Good soil. Bountiful grain.

Hear seeds fall, fall, fall, fall.

We hear, but do we understand?

We hear, but do our lives' incessant winds mangle Jesus' poetic, parabolic words to us?

Words coming from sacred waters.

Words crossing our shores.

Words crashing into us as we stand upon the windy beach underneath the scorching sun.

Understanding requires depth – depth of our souls' soil.

In order for the Sower's falling, falling, falling, falling seeds to crack open and take root in our lives, we need depth of soil.

...How Love burns through the Putting in the Seed

On through the watching for that early birth

When, just as the soil tarnishes with weed,

The sturdy seedling with arched body comes

Shouldering its way and shedding the earth crumbs.¹

Poetic, parabolic words from Robert Frost.

¹ <https://poets.org/poem/putting-seed>

In order for Love's sturdy seedlings to shoulder their way through tarnished, weedy soil –
in order for these seedlings' arched bodies to shed earth's crumbs and reach toward
heaven – we need depth of soil.

For lack of depth in our souls' soil leads to scorched, withered, immobilized roots.

And scorched, withered, immobilized roots cannot and will not nourish the soil of our anxious,
fearful, angry, disappointed, weary, stressed, and aching souls.

We need depth of soil.

If the Sower's seeds fall into depthless soil, the viciousness within ourselves and our world will
violently snatch away the poetry that Jesus sows in our hearts.

If the Sower's seeds fall into depthless soil, then any affliction, distress, oppression, and
persecution will cause us to stumble.

If the Sower's seeds fall into depthless soil, our anxieties and fears, our worries and stresses, this
age's cares and the deceitfulness of wealth will drown us.

If the Sower's seeds fall into depthless soil, then everything that bruises our souls will suffocate
us.

We need depth of soil.

If we are to go out in joy and be led back in peace, we need depth of soil.

If we are to hope in Christ – if we want our thorns to become cypresses and our briers to become myrtles – if we want our inner lives to bear fruit – we need depth of soil.

We need the Sower's seeds to fall upon beautiful and wise and deep soil.

How do we hear the Sower's seeds falling, falling, falling, falling in our souls?

How do we hear them falling along our wilderness path?

How do we hear them falling on our rocky ground?

How do we hear them falling among our thorns?

How do we hear them falling on our good, deep soil?

The Sower's sturdy seedlings of resurrection hope fall upon every aspect of our lives.

The wilderness path. The rocky ground. The choking thorns. The good soil.

The Sower's hope is bountiful.

Feeding the devouring birds.

Springing up quickly.

Living with the thorns.

Bringing forth grain.

Abundant grain that feeds us when the wilderness path, rocky ground, and choking thorns starve us.

Abundant grain that arises from the depths of our soul's soil.

While the Sower's hope falls upon everything – it is only our deep soil that produces enduring roots – roots that graft us into the rich roots of Christ.

Rich roots that create understanding and bear abundant fruit.

Rich roots that plant Jesus' poetry in our souls, ground our feet, and save us from drowning.

We need depth of soil.

As I stand upon the beach's shore and hear Jesus' poetry roll in with the tides of our baptismal waters, here is my wondering – how deep is the soil of our souls?

How deep is the soil of our souls?

The deepening of our souls' soil – the forming of our spirituality – the forming of our identity as disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ is a lifelong process.

From birth to death, God's Word waters our souls' soil and makes that soil sprout.

Here is my other wondering – what are the ways in which we receive the waters of God's Word?

What are our spiritual practices that create space for us to receive the watering of our souls' soil?

What are we doing to deepen the soil that the Sower bountifully seeds?

For as our soil deepens, so shall our hope in the name of Jesus Christ – a hope that fills us with all joy and peace.